

LEAD Repowers Deploying Soldiers

Kim Russell and Mark Sheffield

Images of the global war on terrorism are filled with pictures of Abrams M1 tanks, Bradley Fighting Vehicles, Apache helicopters and up-armored Humvees bristling with weapons. This equipment is undergoing extensive use in Southwest Asia. A common link among these systems is the multitude of supporting generator sets and the Soldiers who operate them.

Letterkenny Army Depot (LEAD) employee Robin Babcock (right) provides training to SGT T. Johnson from B Co., 50th Signal (Sig.) Battalion, 35th Sig. Brigade (Bde.) (Corps) (Airborne) during testing and inspection at Fort Bragg, NC. (U.S. Army photo by PFC Seth Laughter, 35th Sig. Bde. (ABN).)



LEAD employee Bennett Mills puts final touches on a 30-kW generator. (U.S. Army photo by Don Bitner, Depot Photographer.)

The importance of generator sets cannot be overstated for a war that is being fought half a world away in a country with numerous infrastructure challenges. Reliable electric power is the Armed Forces' lifeblood. Without it, all the technical wizardry of modern warfare — the weapons' systems; command, control, communications and intelligence; and logistics support systems — are less than useful.

Mobile electric power generators also power environmental control units necessary to keep running Soldier-essential systems such as tents, showers, medical and food service equipment needed to house, feed and care for Soldiers. Remote maintenance facilities, logistic centers and tactical equipment such as Biological Integrated Detection Systems, weather stations and field hospitals are also powered by mobile generators.

In the Army's current maintenance concept, generator sets are typically repaired and serviced at the unit level. However, the war's increased operations tempo and the sheer number of

assets needing RESET, have provided a very large challenge to many unit motor pools and maintenance support activities.

When the 11th Signal (Sig.) Brigade (Bde.), Fort Huachuca, AZ, returned from Iraq in early 2004, they identified more than 450 generator sets that needed RESET prior to their next deployment. The brigade contacted the U.S. Army Communications-Electronics Command (CECOM) for assistance. CECOM, in turn, contacted Letterkenny Army Depot (LEAD) for support. LEAD had anticipated this challenge and made a commitment to provide Soldiers the necessary support to restore their generators to full operational condition.

LEAD had a well-established generator overhaul capability to support the Patriot RECAP program and other air defense systems. LEAD had also worked with CECOM in developing generator overhaul criteria for Force Provider Systems and had been tasked by CECOM to write national maintenance work

requirements for 13 different generator set engines. Working with CECOM and the 11th Sig. Bde., LEAD developed a statement of work that provided a triage concept to test and inspect generator sets and identify depot-level overhaul candidates.

LEAD initially dispatched a field repair team (FRT) for 4 weeks to complete the technical inspection RESET phase. More than 100 generators were identified as overhaul candidates. Approximately half of these were incrementally evacuated to Letterkenny for remanufacturing, i.e., "0" hours. This large surge of generators provided some interesting challenges to the depot, not the least of which was sufficient floor space to overhaul and repair them. LEAD relied on its experience with Lean manufacturing to overcome these challenges. The 11th Sig. Bde. identified additional requirements, and another team was dispatched to Fort Huachuca to assist the brigade.

The LEAD team worked hand in hand with Soldiers who had deployed with

the generator sets. This provided Soldiers an opportunity to receive depot-level training and gain firsthand knowledge of the repairs accomplished on their equipment. This experience will enable them to perform their skills more adeptly in subsequent unit deployments. The success of the 11th Sig. Bde. was soon followed by an FRT dispatch to the B Co., 50th Sig. Battalion, 35th Sig. Bde. (Corps) (Airborne), Fort Bragg, NC.

Almost 400 generators needed to be evaluated and returned to full mission-capable status. More than 300 generators were triaged onsite, and almost 100 were returned to the depot for overhaul. SSG Todd Robinson led the Letterkenny FRT that traveled to Fort Bragg. Robinson worked together with the 35th Sig. Bde. Soldiers to repair the generators, which support units when they have no power source other than what they move with into a combat area. According to Robinson, some of the old generators were from the Vietnam era.

Robinson and the other depot employees at Fort Bragg are not only repairing generators, they

are also training Soldiers how to maintain and repair generators in the field. "These things do break," explained Robinson. "We are providing their generator mechanics with a lot of valuable knowledge. No one likes being without electrical power," Robinson commented. "Everything that requires power is run from these generators."

Several Soldiers receiving this training while at Fort Bragg were attached to 35th Sig. Bde. SPC J. McLean and SGT T. Johnson, of B Co., thought it was a great idea to work together. Johnson said, "Working side by side with LEAD generator mechanics has better prepared us for going to the field. We work alongside them in performing technical inspections, and now we know better how to check the electrical load and keep these generators operational."

After visits to the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment, Fort Polk, LA, and the 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry), Fort Drum, NY, LEAD decided to increase its generator remanufacturing capability. Although able to produce nearly 100 generator sets per month, the LEAD team decided to add another 45,000 square feet of floor space to their generator capabilities. This recently added floor space will provide LEAD with the ability to remanufacture almost 200 generators per month.

Changing priorities also presented the LEAD team with some challenges. "Letterkenny came through where no one else could," remarked COL Bryan W. Ellis, 35th Sig. Bde. Commander. "As we assessed the condi-

tion of our tactical power generation equipment after *Operations*

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Pool of generators awaiting technical inspection at Fort Bragg. (U.S. Army photo by PFC Seth Laughter, 35th Sig. Bde. (ABN).)



LEAD employees CW3 Randy Schriver (left) and SSG Todd Robinson troubleshoot a generator while on location at Fort Bragg. (U.S. Army photo by PFC Seth Laughter, 35th Sig. Bde. (ABN).)

Enduring Freedom and *Iraqi Freedom* rotations, we realized it was in poor shape due to the harsh operating environment. We soon realized the Army has no formal, centralized RESET program for tactical generators.”

“Initial contact with Letterkenny was positive,” Ellis added. “We entered into an agreement and they delivered. Initial response was so positive that we’ve sent them the remainder of our brigade generators for RESET. Tactical power is our lifeblood — no power, no communications. Letterkenny has performed a ‘power transfusion’ in this brigade and has reinstalled a level of confidence in Soldiers that ensures they will have reliable power to support their efforts in upcoming rotations.”

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CW3 Randy Schriver, LEAD Mobile Electric Power Generation Supervisor commented, “I couldn’t be more proud of the Soldier and civilian workforce and their total team effort in support of our deploying troops.”

Next up for Robinson and his LEAD team were the generators from the 82nd Airborne Division, also at Fort Bragg. Approximately 470 generator sets were evaluated and the first of more than 200 generators were evacuated to the depot for remanufacturing. This program will be completed later in FY05.

The organic depots have once again proven their ability to be flexible, innovative and responsive to an Army at war. When the 35th Sig. Bde. needed immediate assistance, LEAD stepped up to the plate and delivered generator sets in time and

provided valuable depot-level training to brigade Soldiers. COL William Guinn, LEAD Commander, pointed out that “this is just one more example of how the Army’s organic depots can be combat multipliers in supporting the global war on terror. Hooah!”

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